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## MEMOIR OF GEORGE M. LANE.

BY MORRIS H. MORGAN.<sup>1</sup>

GEORGE MARTIN LANE, who died Pope Professor of Latin Emeritus, was the last of the great teachers whose term of service at Harvard began in the middle of the century. He was also, as President Eliot observed in his Annual Report for 1896-97, the last surviving example of a kind of appointment now no longer made: an appointment to a full professorship of a young man who had passed through no period of probation as a teacher either at Harvard or elsewhere. But never, as the President added, was an appointment better justified.

He was born in Charlestown, Mass., in 1823, on December 24, and it was his custom to remark, in teaching Suetonius, that the birthday of the Emperor Galba was the same as his own. One of his favourite anecdotes was about a Harvard student who, on being asked in an examination to give the birthday of this emperor, wrote in his examination book: "I do not remember, sir, the birthday of the Emperor Galba; but I do remember, sir, that it was the same as yours."

His father, Martin Lane, was descended from one of the early settlers of New England, the first Lane having come to Dorchester in 1635, one year before the foundation of Harvard College. Soon after his son's birth, Martin Lane removed from Charlestown to Cambridge, to become the cashier of the old bank, then situated just below what is now Central Square. He lived in a house, still owned by the family, nearly opposite the present City Hall. He did not expect to be able to send his son to college, and therefore proposed to fit him for the life of a merchant. The boy's studies began at Mr. George J. Abbott's school, where he showed himself an apt pupil in the English branches, and was particularly bright in acquiring the

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<sup>1</sup> In this Memoir the writer has occasionally made use of passages drawn from his obituary notice of Mr. Lane in the *Nation* of July 8, 1897.



George M. Lane.

French and Spanish languages, — knowledge unusual for boys of that day. Of his next school Professor Norton writes to me as follows : “ Lane and I first met, I fancy in 1838, at the School kept by C. S. Wheeler, in what had been the dancing-hall in Porter’s Tavern on what is now Boylston Street. Wheeler had just graduated, in 1837; he made an excellent master, and we boys liked and respected him, and looked upon him as a man who, having been thro’ College, had had full experience of life. Since then I have learned to hold his memory in high honor, and am glad to have my pleasant boyish recollections of him. He was fair haired, of comely looks, and an open smile which was the expression of a frank, sweet, and generous disposition. He was a lover of nature, who knew her solitary charm, and he blazed the way, as I have heard, to her recesses for his class-mate Thoreau. He was inspired with the fine spirit of that moment in the intellectual life of New England, but had too well-balanced a mind to accept the extravagances of the Transcendental movement; he was a disciple of Emerson who valued his friendship, and he was a friend, too, of Lowell, his junior by a year in College. He was an admirable student; a lover of books not less than of nature, and as good a scholar of the classics for his years as we then had. While he was teaching school he was at work on an edition of Herodotus, which was published in 1842. I have a copy of it before me as I write, and I am struck, as I turn over its pages, with the learning and the good sense which its notes display. It is a monument to his memory of which any young scholar might be proud. In 1842 he went to Germany to pursue his studies; he was full of ardor, he made many friends, he was enjoying and making the best use of the opportunities of learning which the Old World afforded, when he was struck down by fever, and died, I think at Leipsic. His name ought to be better remembered than I fear it is among Harvard scholars. It was from Wheeler that Lane, I suspect, got his first taste for the classics. It was with him that he first read Virgil. Among his schoolmates Lane was known as ‘George,’ and George was easily at the head of the school. When Wheeler left, the school was taken by Mr. E. B. Whitman (H. U. ’38).”

Up to this time Lane does not seem to have studied Greek at all. But his scholarly ambitions were aroused, and, becoming conscious

of his own powers, he resolved at the age of sixteen to fit himself for college with such help in the necessary Greek as he could get from a companion who had enjoyed the training which he himself lacked. Just as his arrangements were completed, a circular was left at his father's house, announcing that under the old Hopkins bequest a classical school was to be established to prepare Cambridge boys for college. On reading it he said at once: "I must go to that school," and go he did. The school was opened in 1840, and in 1841 it was put in charge of his earlier teacher, Whitman.

Of his unexpected advantages young Lane made the best use, and in two years entered Harvard College. There he distinguished himself as a student, and graduated second in the class of 1846. The first scholar was Francis James Child, his friend and colleague for more than forty years in the college faculty. Between the two there had been the most generous emulation throughout their undergraduate course, — now the one leading and now the other. Pierce, in his *Commencements at Harvard*, says of the year 1846: "The II. English Oration, *Tamerlane*, by George Martin Lane, was well delivered, but did not equal the expectations of some who had heard him at a former exhibition and at the inauguration of President Everett." In these last words Pierce refers to the Latin oration which Lane, then a senior, delivered at Everett's inauguration, on April 30, 1846. It is printed in a pamphlet called *Addresses at the Inauguration of Hon. Edward Everett as President of the University at Cambridge*: Boston, 1846.

Among his companions in college Mr. Lane was a great favourite, and was a member of the Institute of 1770 and the Hasty Pudding, and an honorary member of the Porcellian Club.

It was the special excellence which he showed in Latin during his undergraduate career that led to his profession in life. The fine Petronian scholar, Dr. Beck, who was then our sole professor of Latin, said that he had never before had a pupil who could write Latin as well as Lane. The immediate outcome of this reputation was his appointment, in the second term of the year 1846-47, to take Professor Beck's college work during the latter's absence in Europe. This work consisted in teaching Latin to the three upper classes, and it was performed, to quote from President Everett's Annual Report, "with

entire success." Another record of it comes from one of the undergraduates of the next year, who is now Professor W. W. Goodwin : "The impression which the young scholar made on the students in this trying position, and the respect for his scholarship which he then gained, are still well remembered by his pupils of that day. Those of us who entered college in 1847 will never forget the smooth-faced, almost boyish-looking tutor who examined us in Latin grammar in 24 University Hall, where we expected to find the professor of Latin."<sup>1</sup>

But Mr. Lane was not the man to rest content with the knowledge of classics which this country could then afford. Indeed, he was never content to rest on his acquirements, and this teacher of so many was, like every great scholar, himself first of all a student and ready to learn of others to the end of his life. It seems strange to the present generation that German learning should ever have been forgotten in Harvard College ; yet after Everett, Bancroft, Cogswell, and Ticknor had returned from their studies at German universities, there was a long period during which few Harvard men visited what was then the true Mecca of classical scholarship. It was only natural, however, that a pupil of the German Beck should have been stimulated to study in Beck's native land, and to Germany Mr. Lane betook himself in 1847. There he worked steadily for four years, chiefly in Göttingen, but also in Berlin, Bonn, and Heidelberg. Among his teachers were K. F. Hermann, Schneidewin, Welcker, Heyse, Gerhard, E. Curtius, and Brandis. His notes of their lectures, still preserved, show how regular he was in his attendance and how eager to profit by every word which fell from learned lips. Occasionally, too, they show us a water-colour portrait of the lecturer in his habit as he lectured ; for in Mr. Lane an artist of no mean ability was sunk in the scholar, and painting and drawing were among his chief recreations throughout his life. His friend and classmate, Child, joined him in the last year of his stay in Germany ; and the two Americans, both already past masters in the arts of humour and good fellowship, introduced their German fellow students to various amusements peculiar to American college life. To quote

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<sup>1</sup> From the Minute of the Faculty on the late Professor Lane.

Professor Goodwin again: "Many interesting traditions, some of them perhaps slightly mythical, long survived in Germany, testifying to the high estimation in which Lane's scholarship and good fellowship were held, and to the strict conscientiousness with which he devoted himself, in season and out of season, to the study of his chosen profession. One of his German friends once said that it was not true that he could speak German like a native (as was sometimes reported), but that it was true that he could imitate a local German dialect so that a man from another part of the country would think it was his native tongue." This power over the German language Mr. Lane retained to the end of his life; and often, in his recent journeys, he proved the truth of the statement just made.

While he was a student in Germany he first met Benjamin Apthorp Gould, his senior by two years at Harvard, who had preceded him to Europe to lay the foundations for that work which placed him among the foremost astronomers of the world. The friendship then formed between these congenial spirits was for life, and they were thenceforth to each other as brothers.

In 1851 Mr. Lane received the degree of Ph.D. at Göttingen, his dissertation being entitled *Smyrnaeorum Res Gestae et Antiquitates*. This little work has been an authority ever since it was written, and is still cited as such in the latest treatises on ancient history and geography. From one of his most distinguished teachers, K. F. Hermann, it received the rare compliment of being mentioned in his work on Greek antiquities, in which these words still stand in the fifth edition: "welche fleissige Arbeit alle sonstige Nachweisungen über diese Stadt (Smyrna) unnöthig macht."

Immediately after his return to Cambridge in 1851, Mr. Lane was appointed University Professor of Latin, in succession to Professor Beck, resigned. He thus began to superintend the department of Latin in the penultimate year of President Sparks. His work was, as before, the teaching of the three upper classes, with public lectures on Latin Literature; for the Freshman class at first one and afterwards two tutors were provided. After several years a third tutor was added, and then Professor Lane instructed only the Juniors and Seniors. There was no assistant professor of Latin until 1862. When Professor Lane resigned in 1894, there were three professors,

two assistant professors, and three instructors or tutors comprising the teaching force in Latin. From the first, Plautus and Cicero in his Orations, particularly the Cluentius and the Verrine, were among the authors whom he treated; in 1856 his favourites, Lucretius and Quintilian, made their appearance. In 1869 he was appointed to the newly founded Pope Professorship of Latin. In 1877 he offered "Latin Inscriptions, Orthography and Pronunciation," the first Latin course at Harvard intended primarily for teachers and graduates. The year 1880 saw the advent of Professors Allen and Lanman, and the consequent widening of the instruction in Classics in the direction of courses intended chiefly for graduate students. Professor Lane was ready for the change, and he "availed himself to the utmost of his opportunities, opening his rich stores of erudition without stint to all who were capable of appreciating them."<sup>1</sup> In this year he first offered the course on Quintilian, Gellius, and Latin Inscriptions. The leading idea of this course, as he himself described it, was "to take a fresh look at Latin as it is, as distinguished from artificial and traditional Latin."

Besides his duties as a teacher, Professor Lane served the College as an administrative officer. He was, while in his prime, "one of the most important members of the Faculty, and one of the most constant attendants at its weekly meetings. The records of the Faculty during the years when he was its registrar, and those of the Parietal Board when he was its chairman, not only show his deep interest in the affairs of these Boards, but contain many specimens of his humor, some of which now need a scholiast to elucidate them."<sup>2</sup>

In 1894, after a service of forty-three years, he resigned his professorship and was appointed Pope Professor Emeritus, with a liberal retiring allowance. He also received the honorary degree of LL.D. at the Commencement of that year, and his friends, colleagues, and old pupils took occasion in various ways to testify to their affection and respect for him. A subscription was raised to pay for the portrait which now hangs in the Faculty Room; for this he sat to Léon Bonnat in Paris, in the summer of 1894. An address in Latin was presented to him by his colleagues in the Classical Department,

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Goodwin, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Professor Goodwin, *ibid.*



nearly all of whom had once been his pupils. The seventh volume of the *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* is entirely composed of articles written in his honour by seventeen of his former pupils or colleagues. Arrangements were also made by his friends to give him a public dinner in Boston, but this had to be abandoned on account of a sharp attack of illness which just then beset him. This attack was really the beginning of the end, although neither he nor his friends appreciated the fact. It had been his intention in his retirement to give a course of lectures each year to the most advanced students in the Graduate School; and in 1895-96 he lectured on the *Bacchides* of Plautus. This was offered as a half-course, for the first half-year only; but, at the unanimous request of the students who attended the lectures, he continued it throughout the year. For 1896-97 he announced the Fourth and Fifth Verrine orations. But the promise was not to be fulfilled. His return in the autumn of 1896 from the trip to Europe, which had recently been his annual pleasure, was followed by increase of his rheumatic affection; and after months of suffering, happily unattended by loss of mental powers, the end came, on the morning of Commencement Day, June 30, 1897. Thus died one of the most loyal sons of Harvard; one who, though he could not look with satisfaction upon certain latter-day changes in the University, laboured on cheerfully in his duties to the College which he loved, and was its faithful servant for nearly half a century.

As a teacher, Professor Lane had all that fine literary appreciation which characterizes the English school, combined, however, with the minute and exact knowledge of the Germans. Besides his never-failing good nature, he had two gifts which, perhaps more than any others, awoke the admiration of his undergraduate pupils — his prodigious memory and his great originality of thought. He seemed familiar with every literature; and apposite quotations from the most various sources, now drawn, maybe, from the New England Primer, and now from the greatest of the Classics, were made to illuminate the passage under discussion. The atmosphere of his class-room was thus distinctly literary, and his teaching had none of that deadly dullness which is too often the product of German learning. It was seasoned, too, with his own peculiar wit, of which so many legends

come rising to the mind of every Harvard man. That "sparkling wit was ever ready to illuminate dark corners in even the abstrusest departments of learning, and he could make the driest subject interesting by his skillful and original way of presenting it."<sup>1</sup> But "his teaching was always clear and incisive,"<sup>2</sup> and it never degenerated into literary twaddle; for nobody hated looseness of method and inexactness of statement more than he. To his originality many scholars widely scattered over the land can bear testimony, recalling that it was he who first showed them that there were things to be learned which were not to be found set down in any book; that he initiated them, in fact, into modern methods of individual research, and taught them to seek the truth for themselves. He seldom wasted time in putting questions which could be answered offhand; he never hesitated to suggest problems which nobody present, not even himself, could solve. He made it clear that there were wide untrodden fields on every side and tempted his pupils on to exploration.

The originality which Professor Lane displayed in his teaching was preëminent, too, in his character as a scholar. Although he was perfectly familiar with the modern literature of his subjects, and to the last kept up his acquaintance with the most recent authorities, American and foreign, yet it was evident that he made unto himself no idols. *Nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*, his reading in the ancient authors was so wide and intelligent, and he had pondered over them so long and deeply that he was thoroughly permeated with their modes of expression, as well as with their thought and spirit. Besides this fundamental possession, he had the keenest critical acumen, so that his colleagues and correspondents accepted his dicta (modestly expressed as they always were) like the deliverances of an oracle. He was known for his free and ready communication of the results of his studies, and a timely word from him has saved many a scholar from the publication of mistaken theories or ill-digested views. It is owing, also, to him that the schools and colleges of this country have shaken off the barbarian "English pronunciation" of the Latin tongue. His pamphlet entitled *Latin*

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Goodwin, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> President Eliot, Annual Report for 1896-97.

*Pronunciation* (Cambridge, 1871) "worked a revolution in exterminating the English pronunciation of Latin in this country, a revolution which even the weight and learning of a Munro could never even begin in England."<sup>1</sup> A still greater gift to scholarship at large was his generous coöperation in the production of Harper's Latin lexicons, the second of which was dedicated to him by his friend, the grateful editor. Professor Lane read and corrected a great part of the large lexicon in proof; of his assistance on the School lexicon (by far the more original and trustworthy book) Dr. Lewis writes in his preface that, "if it shall be found, within its prescribed limits, to have attained in any degree that fullness, that minute accuracy, and that correspondence with the ripest scholarship and the most perfect methods of instruction which are its aims, the result is largely due to his counsel and assistance."

Aside from the two pamphlets already mentioned, little was published by Professor Lane. His review of the wretched Riley's Plautus, in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for April, 1853, is a model of painstaking criticism, and was probably the first recognition by an American of the results of Ritschl's studies. In the same periodical for January, 1858, appeared an article signed by him, which, though apparently only a review of the passage on Smyrna in Smith's *Dictionary of Geography*, is really the best account of the early history of that place which we have in English. His criticism of White's *Latin-English Dictionary* in the *North American Review* for April, 1863, is evidence of that temperament which made his help on recent dictionaries so invaluable to Dr. Lewis. For many years he was a reviewer for the *Nation*, but his writings in that journal were of course unsigned and are untraced. To the first volume of the *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, in 1889, he contributed two short articles, one entitled *Notes on Quintilian*, and consisting of three convincing emendations of passages in that author; the other, *On Ellum*, being an etymological explanation of that word.

In order to complete the record, two publications of an entirely different sort may here be mentioned, — the song called *Jonah* and the ballad of the *Lone Fishball*. The former, *Jonah*, or *The Black*

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Goodwin, *ibid.*

*Whale at Ascalon*, was an adaptation of a German student song. The latter was first published anonymously in New York in 1855, and soon became famous all over the country. Many fables about the origin of this song have been told, and one was even printed with the song itself; but I know from Professor Lane's lips that it was based upon an adventure of his own. Arriving in Boston one day after a journey, he found himself hungry and with only twenty-five cents in his pocket. Half that sum he had to reserve to pay his fare to Cambridge. With the rest he entered a restaurant "with modest face," and ordered a half portion of macaroni. What followed is described, doubtless with humorous exaggeration, in the ballad itself. During the late Civil War it was worked over into a mock Italian operetta, *Il Pesceballo*, by Professor Child, with an English version by Professor Lowell, and was performed in Cambridge for the benefit of a fund for the soldiers. The libretto, now extremely rare, was printed at the Riverside Press in 1862.

Among Professor Lane's papers were found not a few manuscripts which had evidently been prepared for the press. Selections from them are published in this volume. But it was for a work of a different sort that his friends and colleagues had long been looking to him,—for his *Latin Grammar*. As early as 1869 he had begun to prepare it. At first it was intended and announced as an *Elementary Latin Grammar*, and nearly the whole book was put into type with no higher aim than to provide an introduction for boys in school. Then the author changed his plan for one which was far more ambitious. This change led to an entire rewriting of the book, so as to make it a manual useful rather to college students and to teachers in schools and colleges than to schoolboys. To perfect it, he entered upon original investigations and studies much wider than those which he had formerly expected to pursue; he was indefatigable in procuring monographs and periodical literature upon Latin Grammar from every side; he carried on correspondence with the chief authorities abroad; his most advanced students gladly joined him in making collections of material. All this, together with his horror of inexactness and of the preaching of false doctrine, led him to turn his stylus so often, and to correct and amplify so much, that as a result the book was unfinished at his death. He left directions with one of his pupils

for its completion, and it was published in 1898, on the first anniversary of his death. That pupil, who writes these words, is obviously precluded from eulogy or criticism of the book. He does venture, however, to repeat Dr. Lewis's prophecy, that it will be found to "mark an epoch in the study of the laws of the language by its clearness, completeness, and accuracy, while excelling its predecessors above all in felicity of expression."<sup>1</sup>

In these days, when opportunities for publication are made so easy, we are perhaps too ready to measure a scholar's greatness by the number of printed pages which he has laid before the world. Judged by so mechanical a standard, the life work of Professor Lane might seem meager indeed. Yet Socrates left not a line behind him; and what were the writings of Schneidewin, of Karl Friederich Hermann, of Jowett, and of our own Torrey and Child, compared to the words of inspiration which fell from them in their daily meetings with their pupils? As was said by a famous scholar, on Professor Lane's death, "The lessons of a great teacher become incarnate in generations of living men;"<sup>2</sup> and by another, "No one ever studied under him but found in after life the pathway of truth smoothed, and the best use of his own faculties made easier by that companionship and guidance."<sup>3</sup> Without detracting from the fame of those who have enriched philology by their writings, we may set beside them — sometimes even above them — the utterers of golden words which are handed down by their pupils to their pupils' pupils; we may remember one of Professor Lane's own remarks, made to a student who was not over regular in his attendance at recitations: "Language, Mr. —, comes from *lingua*, the tongue; and the Latin language can be learned only from the tongue of the master."

This is not the place in which to write at length of Mr. Lane's private life. And yet any picture of him, drawn solely as that of a professional man, would seem grossly inadequate to those who had the good fortune to be his friends. Before his marriage he lived for some years in a little house called "Clover Den," with his three chums, Gould, Winlock, and J. D. Whitney. Many were the amuse-

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<sup>1</sup> *Amer. Journ. Phil.*, vol. xviii, p. 372.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Gildersleeve, *Amer. Journ. Phil.*, vol. xviii, p. 247.

ments which these gay bachelors provided for the staid village of Cambridge. In 1857 he married Frances Eliza, daughter and co-heiress of Samuel Smith Gardiner, of Shelter Island, N. Y., the descendant of Lion Gardiner, lord of the manor of Sylvester there. By her he had a son, Gardiner Martin Lane, and two daughters, Louisa, wife of W. B. Van Rensselaer, of Albany, and Katharine Ward Lane, who died in 1892. In 1878, two years after the death of his first wife, he married Mrs. Fanny (Bradford) Clarke, who survives him.

In his own house this great scholar and teacher threw off the mantle as easily as he had worn it in the professor's chair. There and abroad he was "the brightest of companions, the most generous of hosts, the wittiest and cheeriest of talkers, the most sympathizing of counsellors, the most affectionate of friends."<sup>1</sup> He was an ardent lover of literature and particularly nice in his own use of the English tongue, and in his appreciation of good use of it by others. His broad general culture, his geniality, and his never-failing politeness and *savoir faire* made him a delightful companion. A walk with him in the college yard or in the streets of Cambridge was a unique experience. Nothing escaped his observation, and his knowledge of the history of both town and gown was as remarkable for its minutiae as his knowledge of Latin itself. A good-sized book might easily have been filled with the anecdotes which he alone could tell to perfection. But inimitable as he was in the hour of mirth, he was not unacquainted with sorrow; and his own deep afflictions had taught him to be a gentle and tender comforter of the sick and the bereaved. Beloved and useful in the private and public relations of life, honoured in his old age, after his death he is remembered with gratitude and affection.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lewis, *ibid.*